

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
AID-05 PC-01 HA-05 EB-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /088 W
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P R 242256Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9206
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 5940

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, EC
SUBJECT: NEW ELECTIONS FOR COTOPAXI IN MIDST OF CONTINUING
CHARGES OF FRAUD

1. THE SUPREME ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL (SET) DECIDED ON AUGUST 23
TO CONVOKE NEW ELECTIONS IN COTOPAXI PROVINCE ON SEPTEMBER 16.
THE ENTIRE VOTE OF COTOPAXI WAS NULLIFIED BY THE SET AFTER THE
DISCLOSURE OF AN IRREGULARITY IN THE PREPARATION AND TRANS-
MISSION OF THE OFFICIAL VOTE RESULTS BY THE PROVINCIAL
TRIBUNAL. SET PRESIDENT JOSE BAQUERO DE LA CALLE SAID THAT
THE DECISION TO HOLD NEW ELECTIONS WAS MADE IN CONFORMITY
WITH ARTICLE 93 OF THE ELECTORAL LAW WHICH REQUIRES A RE-ELECTION
WHEN NULLIFICATIONS PLACE THE RESULTS IN DOUBT. THE SET INTER-
PRETED THAT ARTICLE TO MEAN THAT NULLIFICATION OF AN ENTIRE
PROVINCE IS PER SE PREJUDICIAL AND REQUIRES A NEW ELECTION.

2. MEANWHILE, RAUL CLEMENTE HUERTA'S REPRESENTATIVES
BEFORE THE SET CONTINUE TO HURL CHARGES OF WIDESPREAD
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FRAUD. CANNILY MIXING THE IDEAS OF FRAUD AND TECHNICAL
IRREGULARITIES CAUSED PRIMARILY BY SUSPICIOUSLY STRICT
SET INTERPRETATION OF THE LAW, HUERTA'S SUPPORTERS HOPE
TO CONVINCE THE PUBLIC THAT THE 100,000 PLUS NULLIFICATIONS
TO DATE ARE DUE TO THE FRAUD AGAINST THEIR CANDIDATE.
ON AUGUST 23 MAURICIO GANDARA, REPRESENTING HUERTA, INSISTED
THAT NEW ELECTIONS BE HELD NOT ONLY IN COTOPAXI, BUT IN

EVERY PROVINCE WHERE "MASSIVE" NULLIFICATIONS HAVE OCCURRED. HE THREATENED THAT HUERTA WOULD WITHDRAW HIS CANDIDACY IF SUCH NEW ELECTIONS WERE NOT HELD. THAT PROVOKED A RESPONSE FROM CFP/DP REPRESENTATIVE JULIO CESAR TURJILLO TO THE EFFECT THAT THE VOTERS HAD ALREADY WITHDRAWN HUERTA'S CANDIDACY ON JULY 16.

3. IN A POTENTIALLY OMINOUS DEVELOPMENT, SET PRESIDENT BAQUERO DE LA CALLE ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD APPEAR ON A NATION-WIDE RADIO AND TELEVISION NET ON AUGUST 24 TO ANNOUNCE THE DECISION OF THE INVESTIGATING COMMISSION WHICH HAS BEEN LOOKING INTO REPORTS THAT PRE-MARKED BALLOTS WERE GIVEN OUT IN PICHINCHA. HUERTA FORCES HAVE BEEN MAKING MUCH OF SUCH REPORTS, HINTING THAT THEY DEMONSTRATE MASSIVE FRAUD. CFP/DP SOURCES, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAVE TOLD US THAT ONLY FIVE PRE-MARKED BALLOTS (3 FOR HUERTA AND 2 FOR DEMOCRATIC LEFT MAYORAL CANDIDATE MANUEL CORDOVA) WERE FOUND. DEPENDING ON THE RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATING COMMISSION, BAQUERO'S STATEMENT COULD ALLEVIATE OR ADD TO THE MOUNTING UNCERTAINTY OVER ELECTORAL PURITY.

4. COMMENT: MANY OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT A BANDWAGON EFFECT HAS BEGUN HERE AND THAT JAIME ROLDOS WILL GAIN VOTES IN THE SECOND ROUND. THE NEW ELECTION IN COTOPAXI WILL PROVIDE A SIGNIFICANT PREVIEW OF WHAT IS LIKELY TO TAKE PLACE NATIONALLY IN THE SECOND ROUND. HOWEVER, THE
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CONTINUED EFFORTS BY HUERTA SUPPORTERS TO CREATE THE APPEARANCE OF MASSIVE FRAUD, AND THE SET'S APPARENT WILLINGNESS TO PLAY ALONG WITH THAT STRATEGY, CONTINUES TO PRESENT THE MOST SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO THE CONTINUATION OF THE RETORNO PROCESS.
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